

his family, endured malnutrition, and escaped attacks by rebel groups seeking child soldiers, only to find himself alone in a refugee camp. He eventually was resettled in the United States, arriving in Vermont in 2001, graduating from the University of Vermont, becoming an American citizen, and going on to get his master's degree. He was my constituent for many years, and I am very proud of the work he did as a member of the South Sudanese diasporic community who returned to his native country to help rebuild. President Kiir may not have known that Abraham Awolich was my constituent or that I will always consider him my constituent. So I call upon him now to immediately release Kuel Aguer Kuel and Augustino Ting Mayai, to cancel the arrest warrants for Rajab Mohandis and Abraham Awolich, and end the repression of civil society leaders, journalists, and dissidents.

I want to read into the RECORD a quote from Abraham Awolich's statement at the launch of their movement. What he said is instructive to every citizen of every democracy around the world. He said, "In the last 10 years the people of South Sudan have been dormant, they have not been challenging the status quo in the Republic of South Sudan and we cannot expect to have a democratic country without active citizenship."

President Kiir has an opportunity now, with a new Parliament seated and the seeds for an active and engaged citizenry sown, to show true leadership. He has no time to waste, or he will risk wasting his country's future and losing the support of the United States.

BELARUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in early 2011, I had one of the more unusual experiences of my Senate career. I traveled back in time, from a free and democratic Lithuania to a closed and totalitarian Belarus. The trip was less than 3 hours, but it took me back to a dark past.

You see, Belarus is the last dictatorship in Europe. But like many dictatorships, it claims to be a democracy. In December 2010, it held what was billed as a Presidential election. The victor in that rigged contest was a heavy by the name of Alexander Lukashenko. His first act, after seizing the Presidency, was to jail all of those who were bold enough to run against him.

Months later, I drove from Vilnius to Minsk to meet with the family members of those jailed candidates, who had been arrested by Belarus security services still called the KGB. Mind you, the original KGB was dissolved more than three decades ago. That tells you all you need to know about how much the Belarusian Government has evolved since the fall of the Soviet Union. My meeting with those family members was sobering, and it is an encounter I will never forget.

Fortunately, over time, we were able to see the release of all these brave Belarusians, but not because Alexander Lukashenko had a sudden change of heart. He is still the same authoritarian thug he has always been. The world was reminded of that a year ago, when another sham election was held in Belarus. True to form, Lukashenko was reelected in that rigged contest. And once again, he began jailing those who had opposed him.

When one leading candidate, social media personality Sergei Tikhanovsky, was arbitrarily jailed, his wife Svetlana Tikhanovskaya stepped in to run in his place. She likely won the ensuing election, although we will never know for certain. The stolen electoral process that unfolded scared her into fleeing for safety in neighboring Lithuania.

Last month, Ms. Tikhanovskaya traveled to Washington, DC, to seek support for the Belarussian peoples' fight for freedom from tyranny. I was proud to meet with her, along with Senators SHAHEEN and SULLIVAN. And I was glad to see President Biden met with her as well. Svetlana Tikhanovskaya is a brave patriot carrying the torch of democracy for all the people of Belarus.

I thought of her, and other Belarussian patriots, as I watched the Olympics this week. In Tokyo, another brave Belarussian woman, sprinter Krystsina Tsimansouskaya, dared to publicly criticize Belarussian Olympic officials, a group from Lukashenko's ruling party. For her audacity, Lukashenko ordered the 24-year-old sprinter to return to Belarus immediately, right before she was scheduled to run in the women's 200-meter race on Monday.

If she had obliged, there is a very good chance she would be locked up in a Belarussian jail at this very moment, along with so many other political prisoners. But Krystsina Tsimansouskaya said no. At the Tokyo airport, before she could be forced onto a plane home, she sought protection from Japanese police. She also appealed to the International Olympic Committee for help. Her appeals worked. The Polish Government granted her a humanitarian visa. And Slovenia and the Czech Republic said she was welcome in their countries, too.

Ten years since my trip to Belarus, I am still moved by the courage of so many Belarussians like Ms. Tsimansouskaya, Ms. Tikhanovskaya, and the thousands upon thousands who have peacefully protested for a better future. These heroic leaders are still trapped in a dark past thanks to the same ruthless dictator who continues to cling onto power.

They are willing to risk so much for a chance at freedom. They are unafraid to stand up to despots and defend democracy. And they are an inspiration to a world that needs it. I want them to know we see them, and America stands

with them in their efforts to create a better and truly democratic Belarus.

HUNGARY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on a related note, Alexander Lukashenko may be the last dictator in Europe. But Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban is working hard to become the next dictator in Europe.

In his 15 years as Prime Minister, Orban has undermined Hungary's democratic institutions and the civil society groups that support them. He has dusted off the autocrat's handbook and used many of its familiar tricks, including using public funds to reward his cronies, spying on and jailing dissidents and independent journalists, and turning media organizations into his personal mouthpieces.

He spews ultranationalist bigotry dressed up as traditional values and rails against what he calls an immigrant invasion. Critics on both sides of the Atlantic cite him as a cautionary example of how democracies can die. Some European leaders have called for Hungary's expulsion from the E.U. because of Hungary's growing hostility to the bedrock values of democracy under Orban.

Despite this, every night this week, Tucker Carlson has broadcast his prime-time FOX show from Budapest, Hungary. He is not there to interview the brave supporters of Hungarian democracy who are trying to save their country from Orban and autocracy.

No, Tucker Carlson is in Hungary to praise Orban and hold up his strongman stunts as an example for America to follow. It is reported that he will also address a conference linked to Mr. Orban's anti-democratic nationalist movement.

Tucker Carlson has gone from spouting his dangerous anti-vax quackery and spreading the Big Lie at home, to travelling abroad to fawn over an autocrat and herald him as a leader worth emulating in this country.

Ronald Reagan would be horrified. We all should be.

THE GHOST ARMY CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise to recognize the contributions of the Ghost Army units of World War II and explain why I decided to join the Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal Act as a cosponsor. The 23rd Headquarters Special Troops and the 3133rd Signal Service Company, together known as the Ghost Army, used deception tactics to fool the German Army about the location of American troops. These specialized units used inflatable tanks and sound effects to give the impression of a larger presence. While their role was theatrical, the units suffered casualties and operated close to the front lines. For over 50 years, these units and the contributions of the men who comprised them were kept a secret. I

learned of the success of the Ghost Army from my constituent, Caleb Sinnwell of Nashua, IA. He won first place in the National History Day Project for his website about the Ghost Army and has been tirelessly advocating for this legislation to award the unit a Congressional Gold Medal. I thank him for his advocacy and for his admirable dedication to ensuring that those who sacrificed to ensure that the freedom and rights that we prize in America were protected are always remembered.

CONFIRMATION OF ROBERT PETER SILVERS

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, had there been a recorded vote, I would have voted no on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 158, Robert Peter Silvers, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans, Department of Homeland Security.

THE NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, the Senate is considering an infrastructure bill, and I am glad we are. For too long, Americans have been compelled to send their tax dollars overseas to improve the infrastructure of other countries. I have been fighting, for several years, to invest in infrastructure here at home, which is why I find it frustrating that the very people who celebrate this package today actually opposed my efforts in the past.

We have a short memory here in the Senate. Only 2 years ago, I offered my Penny Plan for Infrastructure for a vote. My plan would have invested nearly \$40 billion in infrastructure over those 2 years. In those 2 years, nearly 20,000 miles of roads could have been resurfaced. Instead, those investments weren't made and 2 additional years of wear and tear passed by.

The parade of Senators coming to the floor and expounding upon the urgency of this package is nothing less than shocking, particularly when those same Members voted against 20,000 miles of resurfaced roads only a short time ago.

The Penny Plan was not my only effort to invest in infrastructure. Six years ago, I worked on a bipartisan package that would have made \$ 130 billion available for infrastructure. Had my plan been enacted into law, Americans would now be driving on 130 thousand miles of new roads.

So, why for more than 5 years have my infrastructure proposals been stilled? For only one reason: each of my proposals were paid for.

And if there is only one thing Congress always agrees on: never pay for any new spending. Ever.

Proponents of this bill claim it is paid for. And by using budgetary gimmicks, they hope they will erect enough smoke and mirrors to obscure this bill's enormous price tag. But this

\$1.2 trillion bill is not paid for. And, perhaps the most alarming part of the cost, is the authors of this bill know it is not paid for. And we know that because they wrote the bill so as to exempt it from rules that require the bill be paid for.

You see, Congress passed a law back in 2010 mandating that new spending has to be paid for. That law is called statutory pay-go, or pay as you go. And if Congress can't help itself and refuses to offset the cost of new spending, pay-go is enforced by an automatic cut to spending elsewhere.

But Congress rarely adheres to its own rules. Instead, Congress waived pay-go more than 60 times over the past decade and added over \$10 trillion to our debt.

This time is no different. This bill, which its proponents say is paid for, also carries a provision that says pay-go won't apply to it.

The only way to ensure Congress adheres to pay-go is through a point of order. If this bill is actually paid for, then you should have no trouble supporting the point of order. But if you vote to waive the point of order, if you vote to exempt Congress from its own rule requiring that we be good stewards of taxpayer dollars, then stop telling people something you know is not true. The truth is, this bill is not paid for.

And every American should ask a simple question: Why won't Congress obey its own rules?

This bill plus the next pork-laden bill will add trillions of dollars of new debt. We are adding debt at an unprecedented pace. There will be repercussions. A day of reckoning awaits.

But today there is a choice to make. A vote for the point of order is a vote not to keep adding debt.

I urge my colleagues to vote with me to stop the bleeding, to stop the red ink that threatens our country's future.

OIL AND GAS LEASES MORATORIUM

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, I rise today in support of North Dakota Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem filing a lawsuit against the Biden administration's continued cancellation of oil and gas leases on Federal lands and its impact on State and private mineral owners.

In addition to being a foolish idea, I believe President Biden's moratorium is illegal. It increases Federal and State budget shortfalls, hampers State and private mineral owners' rights, and makes the United States less energy independent and more reliant on foreign producers.

My State of North Dakota is uniquely harmed by this action, given what is commonly referred to as the split estate issue. For roughly 100 years, the Federal Government has retained Federal mineral rights on land near where State and/or private entities also hold surface and mineral rights. About 30

percent of the spacing units in North Dakota have interspersed federal mineral interests and therefore must go through the leasing process of the Bureau of Land Management—BLM—regardless of its size.

Accordingly, since the moratorium, it is estimated our State has lost \$4.77 billion in tax revenues and \$1.2 billion in private royalties. We are grateful the Louisiana Federal District Court Order agreed the Biden administration's actions are illegal, but unfortunately, we are being given no reason to think the near of this harmful policy is near.

On a recent call between the leadership of the BLM Montana/Dakotas office and constituents from the region, BLM officials stated that they are canceling quarterly lease sales at least through the end of calendar year 2021. Citing the administration's plans to appeal the district court ruling, State Director John Mehloff said, "We'll probably, at earliest, would be able to hold an oil and gas lease sale late first quarter of 2022."

That is disappointing, to say the least. Thankfully, North Dakota is taking action to protect our producers and America's energy security. I support the State's efforts in court and hope they are successful.

RECHARGE ACT

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Mr. President, I recently introduced the RECHARGE Act, S. 2241, with my friend and colleague, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and we are very pleased that this bill, as amended, is included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act as Section 40431.

Section 40431 amends section 111(d) of the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978, 16 U.S.C. 2621(d) in order to establish a new requirement that all public utilities—investor-owned utilities, customer-owned cooperatives, and public power utilities—must consider establishing EV-specific rates for residential customers, EV drivers, and commercial customers, who operate public and fleet EV charging stations, to promote greater electrification in the transportation sector.

Lowering emissions in the transportation sector will hinge upon the electrification of our country's motorized vehicles. Large investments in electric vehicle, or EV, charging infrastructure of the type included in other sections of this legislation will provide a catalyst for mass EV adoption.

The successful adoption of EVs will depend not only upon modernizing America's grid and charging infrastructure, but also upon updating our electricity sector rates, so that the infrastructure funded by this act can operate in an economically sustainable manner for decades to come. The commercial rates present today were not designed with the unique electricity load profile of a growing EV fleet in mind.